

ILLINOIS COMMERCE COMMISSION

DOCKET NO.

PREPARED DIRECT TESTIMONY OF

SHARON L. DURBIN

**OFFICIAL FILE**

I.C.C. DOCKET NO. 00-0789 / 01-0046

IP Exhibit No. 2.0, 2.1

Witness

Durbin

Date

4/25/01

Reporter

KL

1 1. Q. Please state your name, business address, and present position.

2 A. Sharon L. Durbin, 500 S. 27<sup>th</sup> Street, Decatur, Illinois 62521. I am a  
3 loaned executive from Illinois Power Company and I am the Executive  
4 Director of A Hand Up, Inc.<sup>TM</sup>. I have been employed with Illinois Power  
5 for 22 years.

6 2. Q. Please summarize your educational background and professional  
7 experience.

8 A. In 1999, I received an Associate Degree in Business Administration and I  
9 expect to receive a Bachelor of Science in Business Management this year.

10 3. Q. What is the purpose of your testimony?

11 A. The purpose of my testimony is to discuss A Hand Up, Inc. <sup>TM</sup> and explain  
12 the benefits provided to utility customers in Illinois.

13 4. Q. What is A Hand Up, Inc.<sup>TM</sup>?

14 A. Illinois Power and interested citizens have worked together to form and  
15 operate A Hand Up, Inc.<sup>TM</sup>, which is a unique work donation and  
16 education program. It was incorporated in 1997 to provide a means for  
17 low-income individuals to work to pay off delinquent utility bills.

18 5. Q. Briefly explain the impetus for the incorporation of A Hand Up, Inc. <sup>TM</sup>.

19 A. As a Customer Assistance Advisor for Illinois Power, I was responsible to  
20 help low-income customers or other customers who were in the threat of  
21 being disconnected to find resources within the community to help them  
22 get their utility bill paid. While assisting customers, I noticed a pattern

23 which repeated itself each year. The customer who was in need of  
24 assistance would go to the local Low Income Home Energy Assistance  
25 Program ("LIHEAP") which was run through our Community Action  
26 Agency. Through that program, the eligible customer would receive  
27 financial assistance by way of a \$750 pledge. The eligible customer was  
28 not expected to give anything in return for the pledge. In exchange for the  
29 pledged amount, Illinois Power would set up a traditional billing  
30 agreement, reconnect the customer, only to watch that customer default  
31 the billing agreement 30 days later. The customer would not submit  
32 payment in a timely fashion and the customer was disconnected the next  
33 April. This pattern developed for many low income customers. In an  
34 effort to assist these customers, I developed a plan which provided a  
35 means for low-income individuals to work to pay off delinquent utility  
36 bills.

37 6. Q. What is the mission of A Hand Up, Inc.™?

38 A. Our mission is to inspire and enable people to improve their lives through  
39 collaboration with communities, faith-based organizations, government,  
40 and social services, by offering avenues of assistance that promote dignity  
41 and self-sufficiency for a life changing experience. We simply want to  
42 help people help themselves.

43 7. Q. Could you explain how A Hand Up, Inc.™ works in helping utility  
44 customers?

45           A.     Our program is uniquely designed to not only help the customer help  
46                 themselves, but our program also benefits the communities in which the  
47                 program is implemented. The utility customer who actually has a  
48                 delinquent bill completes an application with A Hand Up, Inc.<sup>TM</sup>. The  
49                 eligible customer becomes a volunteer to a local not-for-profit  
50                 organization. We have worked with food pantries, thrift shops, senior  
51                 centers and other community service agencies. As a volunteer, the eligible  
52                 customer provides labor for an organization. The eligible utility customer  
53                 also has the option to attend classes toward their General Education  
54                 Diploma ("GED"). Most recently, we have also incorporated the theory of  
55                 workshops where the eligible utility customer is able to attend workshops  
56                 in which speakers discuss issues such as money management and energy  
57                 conservation. A Hand Up, Inc.<sup>TM</sup> also offers education opportunities  
58                 through colleges and various speakers that might give that individual some  
59                 hope for a new avenue to step up and make a change in their life.

60                 The eligible utility customers receive a credit toward the utility bill  
61                 balance at the rate of \$10.00 per hour for working, attending GED classes  
62                 or workshops. Upon completion of a certain number of hours,  
63                 volunteering or attending classes, A Hand Up, Inc.<sup>TM</sup> sends payment for  
64                 the delinquent utility bill. The maximum any eligible customer may  
65                 receive is \$750.00 per year.

66       8.     Q.     What resources has Illinois Power provided since 1991?

67 A. The company has given in excess of \$500,000.00, as well as in-kind  
68 support from within the organization to support this program on an  
69 ongoing basis. In addition, Illinois Power contributes my entire salary  
70 each year.

71 9. Q. Are there other organizations who have contributed to A Hand Up, Inc.™?

72 A. Yes. The Illinois Department of Commerce and Community Affairs has  
73 contributed a significant amount of funding. We receive grants from them  
74 to support our belief in people.

75 10. Q. Do you work with other utility companies in the State?

76 A. Yes. This fiscal year we are working with Central Illinois Light Company  
77 and City Water, Light & Power

78 11. Q. A Hand Up, Inc.™ has been in existence since its incorporation in 1997,  
79 could you briefly explain the success that you have had?

80 A. We have helped over 4,000 utility customers since the inception of the  
81 program. Included within that figure, we have helped over 175  
82 individuals obtain their General Education Diploma, 75 individuals obtain  
83 full-time employment, and 60 individuals complete some type of  
84 vocational training.

85 12. Q. What kind of public response have you received?

86 A. It has been very positive. We have been noted in *Business Week*,  
87 September 20, 1999 and *The Wall Street Journal*, April 13, 1999. We  
88 have also received a nomination from a local agency in Decatur called

89 Green Thumb. A Hand Up, Inc.<sup>TM</sup> hired one of their volunteers. We have  
90 also been recognized on MSNBC and by Peter Jennings on ABC Nightly  
91 News.

92 13. Q. Have you also received "congratulations" from other utilities?

93 A. Yes, we have. We have received letters as well as personal responses  
94 from the utility companies with whom we are working.

95 14. Q. How does A Hand Up, Inc.<sup>TM</sup> communicate to the utility customers it  
96 serves?

97 A. We provide a toll free number (1-866-242-6387 – 1-866-A HAND UP).  
98 In addition, we provide a web site at [ahandup.com](http://ahandup.com) to provide information  
99 about the program. This site has an e-mail link to the Executive Director  
100 for any questions or concerns about the program.

101 15. Q. Have you received inquiry on a national basis?

102 A. Yes. We have received interest from California, Canada, Tennessee, New  
103 York and Florida. We also have sent a packet of information explaining A  
104 Hand Up, Inc.<sup>TM</sup> to the White House. A copy of the information sent to  
105 the White House is attached as Exhibit 2.1.

106 16. Q. Does this conclude your direct testimony?

107 A. Yes.

2.1

A Hand Up, Inc. <sup>TM</sup>

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"Helping People Help Themselves" <sup>TM</sup>

Seek us out of desperate need  
And demonstrate a willingness to rise.  
Speak openly and honestly,  
Come in good faith, trust, set aside disguise.

Work with us, as we work for you.  
That we might help you find a better way.  
To help yourself erase the things,  
That brought you through our open door today.

We welcome you, but we're not here,  
To drop a dime or dollar in a cup.  
Though, we *will* add our strength to yours.  
And show you to a steady course...A Hand Up.  
---Dave Bordner - Peoples Energy

Opportunities  
come  
to those  
who set out  
to meet them



**A Hand Up, Inc.™**  
Helping People Help Themselves™

Founded by Illinois Power

## Mission Statement

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To Inspire and enable people to improve their lives and the world around them through collaboration with communities, faith-based communities, government, and social service agencies, by offering avenues of assistance that promote dignity and self-sufficiency for a life changing experience.



**“Down in their hearts,  
wise men know this truth;  
the only way to help yourself is to**

**help others.”  
--Elbert Hubbard**

Opportunities  
come  
to those  
who set out  
to meet them

"Give a man a fish and feed him for a day,  
Teach a man to fish and feed him for a lifetime."

**How our program began.**

Between 1991 and 1997, 50 Illinois Power (IP) customers met their obligations to creditors by participating in a work donation "program." It began when an IP Customer Assistance Advisor received a referral to help a customer whose electricity and gas had been disconnected.

The customer's account balance was more than \$2,000. Each year in October, the local Low Income Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP) paid \$750 on the customer's account. IP would then reconnect the customer's service and allow them to enter a non-traditional deferred billing agreement for the balance of the bill. Subsequently, the customer would not make payments on the account, resulting in a high balance and disconnection the following April. When the advisor reviewed the customer's account she realized this situation occurred annually.

Having recognized the pattern of failed billing agreements; the advisor declined to offer "special" payment arrangements this time. The perpetual cycle of enabling this customer had never resulted in bringing their past due balance current. As winter got closer, the advisor realized the family could not survive the winter without heat, and she brainstormed a concept that would enable them to help themselves: "work donation." She contacted several area churches and a township supervisor to explain her idea and they each pledged \$100. The following day the couple began cleaning up an old building that would later be home to a thrift shop. For each hour they donated work, the advisor awarded them \$10 of the agency donations. At the end of three weeks, the couple worked off the \$2000 utility bill and their service was reconnected.

The really amazing thing happened a few days later. The husband visited IP's office to thank the advisor and to express gratitude for her help.

"I thought I would be on welfare for the rest of my life. For the past several weeks I have gone to bed tired and exhausted from working. I loved that feeling. It made me feel so good about myself. After completing the work program, I pounded the pavement and I have a job."

"Joe"

The Customer Assistance Program was phased out in 1995, however, the former advisor (in her new position as a customer relations manager) continued to help customers using this concept. She wrote a business case for turning it into a corporate sponsored program that would have the ability to reach far more people. IP management embraced the concept with a \$500,000 in grants, in-kind services and a full-time work donation administrator position. Work donation was no longer a concept. A Hand Up, Inc. began.

**A Hand Up, Inc.™**  
*"Give a man a fish  
and feed him for a day;  
Teach a man to fish and feed him for a  
Lifetime."*

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Program Description, Mission & Goals

A Hand Up, Inc.,™ (AHU) is a unique work donation and education program. AHU was created in 1997 to provide a means for low-income individuals to work to pay off delinquent utility bills. Helping people help themselves. That is the mission of AHU a nonprofit community based-organization.

AHU provides low-income people with jobs in food pantries, thrift shops, senior centers and other community service agencies. Those without a high school diploma have the option of getting credit toward their utility debt by taking GED classes. Ten dollars is pledged for each hour the client works or attends class. The amount earned is paid directly to the utility.

A Hand Up, Inc.™ strives to:

- ❑ Assist people in meeting their financial needs.
- ❑ Promote long-term solutions to recurring debt.
- ❑ Inform people of employment, training and education options in their community.
- ❑ Help people develop motivation and self-esteem.
- ❑ To expand the Hand Up program statewide as a collaborative, comprehensive effort, to "help people help themselves."

Program History & Partnerships

Illinois Power joined with interested citizens to build an organization to provide people who have financial problems new opportunities to improve their economic situations. Illinois Power's support has included legal assistance from corporate attorneys, the dedicating of a job position to expand the program and grants of \$500,000.

In 1999, the program received a one million-dollar grant from the Illinois Department of Commerce and Community Affairs (DCCA). This partnership has enabled the program to expand into more than four dozen counties in the state of Illinois. In October 2000, DCCA awarded AHU a \$2.2 million-dollar grant.

More than 2500 people have gotten help with utility bills and tens of thousands of hours have been donated to non-profit community agencies. More than 350 AHU work donation and education sites are now available in nearly four dozen counties in the state of Illinois. Not only does AHU collaborate with nonprofits and education organizations; it also builds relationships with utilities throughout the state of Illinois.

individuals, families and ultimately, the communities in which we live. As the program expands and builds more relationships, it opens the door to new ideas, new partnerships, and life changing solutions for the families we are serving.

# A Hand Up, Inc.™



- Work off your utility bills
- Get your GED
- Learn new job skills
- Learn Budget Management
- Learn how to Conserve Energy
- Learn how to Dress for Success
- Participate in job partnerships programs

## High Utility Bills Forecasted

Are high utility bills getting you down? Do you receive LIHEAP Assistance? If so, let us give you A Hand Up. For more information contact your local representative.

1-866-A Hand Up

**EARN \$10.00  
AN HOUR**

**Helping People Help Themselves™**

Give a man a fish and feed him for a day  
Teach a man to fish and feed him for a lifetime.

Opportunities  
come  
to those  
who set out  
to meet them

"Poverty is hard,

but debt

is horrible."

--Charles H. Spurgeon

## **Mission**

To inspire and enable people to improve their lives and the world around them through collaboration with communities, faith-based communities and agencies, by offering avenues of assistance that promote dignity and self-sufficiency to people in need with a hand up.

## **Benefits**

- A Hand Up, Inc. is an established 501-©-3 accepted nonprofit enterprise. We are providing you with the benefit of our success and experience in "helping people help themselves." AHU program is a ready-made product equipped to extend our program benefits to utility customers.
- Our partnership with the Illinois Department of Commerce and Community Affairs (DCCA) has enabled our organization to continue in our belief in people, by providing financial support to expand our program, to "help people help themselves."
- AHU program is a vehicle for utilities to creatively work with the LIHEAP customer to keep their service connected, while resolving the complete debt owed by the customer, thus eliminating costly manpower hours associated with the credit and collection process.
- AHU program provides financial benefit to the utility through the collection of bad debts, finaled accounts, and delinquent balances. As a corporate neighbor the Hand Up program makes good sense. But more importantly, it provides a benefit to the utility customer for life changing opportunities. Not only is the utility company providing an innovative service to serve utility low-income customer but a motivating avenue to promote personal success.
- AHU serves as an experienced consultant for working with utility customers to introduce them to programs that provide training and education.
- 
- AHU provides accounting procedures that conformed to the American Standards on Accounting and Reporting.
- As a partner, utilities have access to our program guidelines, program agreements, use of our name, our logo, and the dollars we receive to benefit their customers. Our invested dollars to build our program now benefit utility investment in helping people.



**A Hand Up, Inc. <sup>TM</sup>**  
**"Helping People Help Themselves" <sup>TM</sup>**

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- AHU provides a toll free number (1-866-A Hand Up) for any utility customer to discuss confidential concerns about the AHU program, administrating agencies representing AHU, or the utility.
- AHU program is designed to motivate customers toward achieving their GED. Upon several interviews with customers and college partners, AHU program has been the needed "carrot" to encourage young and older adult customers to get their GED. This is the first step to stepping up.
- AHU provides workman's Compensation and general liability insurance on all participating customers.
- AHU provides all brochures with the same message being communicated to all customers.
- Contributions are tax deductible.

**AHU reviews and processes the applications for conformity to the following guidelines**

- DCCA
- AHU
- Illinois Department of Labor
- IRS
- Social Security Disability
- Public Aid
- American Disability Act
- Annual auditing of the program

**AHU provides monthly reports to DCCA and all participating utilities on the following information.**

- Customer name
- Account number
- Dollar amount of assistance
- Other sources that helped AHU bring the customer's account balance to zero.
- The number of customer's who received their GED
- The number of customer's who received a job (as a result of job training)
- The number of customer's who received computer training, job training, etc.
- The number of customer's who go on utility company's levelized payment plan.
- The number of customer's who were reconnected
- The number of customer's who were prevented from being disconnected.

**Additional benefits**

- AHU is a vehicle to recover bad debts
- AHU is a vehicle to capture "final account" dollars before going to collection agencies. AHU is a vehicle to keep families together preventing homelessness due to outstanding utility debts.
- AHU is an avenue for LIHEAP customers to "work off" their good faith when they are disconnected. This service and benefit provides a more timely recovery for collecting revenue that may have otherwise gone to a collection agency.
- AHU program is an excellent avenue for utility customers to "work off" their utility bill preventing disconnection.

**“Coming together is a beginning;**

**Keeping together is progress;**

**Working together is SUCCESS”**

**Henry Ford**

Opportunities  
come  
to those  
who set out  
to meet them



OFFICE OF PUBLIC UTILITIES  
CITY OF SPRINGFIELD, ILLINOIS

KAREN HASARA, MAYOR

GENERAL OFFICE

July 18, 2000

Mr. Wayne Curtis, Chief  
Office of Human Services  
Department of Commerce and Community Affairs  
620 East Adams Street  
Springfield, IL 62701

Dear Mr. Curtis:

This is a letter of enthusiastic support for the assistance program, A Hand Up, and a request for its continued funding from the Department of Commerce and Community Affairs.

City Water, Light and Power began participating in A Hand Up in February 2000. Our experience through only four months can only be termed a success. About 150 customers have enrolled in the work program or G.E.D. classes. Several customers avoided electric service disconnection and others had service restored. Moreover, through May, CWLP had received \$9,335.35 in payments for customers who had completed the program. But in my opinion, the most important statistic is this: 17 previously unemployed customers were hired into full-time jobs as a result of the work program. And many others are learning the skills needed to become employed.

A Hand Up is the only low-income assistance program that I have seen that promotes self-sufficiency. Through education and training, participants in the program can acquire the skills to have success at work. Continued funding from DCCA will move more people off welfare.

Last year, participating utilities were not required to provide a contribution for administrative costs. Although CWLP is nearly halfway through its fiscal year, we are willing to commit \$10,000 for administrative support in state fiscal year 2001.

We hope that this commitment and the program's tremendous success will help obtain continued state funding. A Hand Up works. Please contact me at 789-2116 x520 if you need any further information.

Sincerely,

Phillip M. Gonet  
General Manager

PMG:pkb

Cy: Sharon Durbin  
Illinois Power Co.  
500 South 27<sup>th</sup> Street, A-16  
Decatur, IL 62521-2200

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## A Hand Up nominated for Green Thumb award

DECATUR — A Hand Up Inc., a nonprofit agency started in Decatur by Illinois Power Co. and administered through Green Thumb, has been nominated for a national Green Thumb award for Outstanding Community Service Project of 1997-1998.

A Hand Up was started to help those who were unable to pay power bills. Now it solicits donations and funding from civic groups, individuals and businesses to support service projects

needed in the community.

Individuals with financial obligations can come to A Hand Up, which operates at the Mission Thrift Store, 1025 N. Water St.

Green Thumb enrollee and community service coordinator Betty Green then connects them with community assignments. Once the community service work is completed, A Hand Up mails a check on behalf of the individual directly to pay rent, medical or utility bills.

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July 12, 2000

Hand Up, Inc.

Ref: Ms. Kristi Durbin

Dear Sir/Ms:

I recently completed a work program initiated by Ms. Kristi Durbin. I wish to briefly address both the program and Ms. Durbin.

Many agencies tend to treat applicants/recipients as criminals, or second-class citizens. In the vast majority of cases the applicant has found himself/herself in an undesirable financial condition beyond their control.

In my case, I was treated with great respect and professionalism. Frankly, I was surprised, having expected to be treated as a "beggar." Ms. Durbin talked "to" me, not "at" me....or worse, down to me.

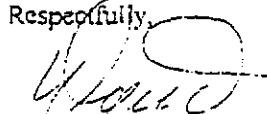
She is to be commended for her professionalism, pleasant attitude and prompt attention to detail.

It is my fervent hope I never have to avail myself of your services again. However, should that ever occur, it is a feeling of relief knowing that a helpful person such as Ms. Durbin will be available to lend help and support.

She is a positive reflection of your Agency. Please convey my heartfelt "Thanks" to her.

I wish to say "Thank You" to your Agency as well for being there when I needed you.

Respectfully,



David Eaton  
Taylorville, IL.



TO: A HANDS UP PROGRAM  
FROM: VITA S. HAWTHORNE  
TO: MS. BETTY GREEN AND THE  
STAFF

GREETINGS UNTO YOU, I WOULD LIKE TO  
TAKE THE TIME TO SAY THANK-YOU FOR  
YOUR HELP IN FINDING WORK FOR ME TO  
DO SO THAT MY FAMILY AND I WOULD NOT  
BE LEFT IN THE COLD AND DARK. I WAS  
NOT WORKING AND MY HUSBAND LEFT ME  
OWING A LARGE POWER BILL TO ILLINOIS  
POWER AND I HAVE BEEN VERY SICK AND I  
AM ON OXYGEN AT NIGHT AND HAD IT  
NOT BEEN FOR BETTY GREEN AND THE  
STAFF HELPING ME OUT I WOULD HAVE  
HAD A BREAKDOWN AND NOT BEEN ABLE  
TO FUNCTION. THANK-YOU SO MUCH FOR  
YOUR HELP AND LOVE FOR PEOPLE AND I  
KNOW THAT GOD WILL BLESS ALL OF YOU  
THAT HELP PEOPLE, THAT RUN INTO HARD  
TIMES IN THE YEAR.. MERRY CHRISTMAS  
AND THANK-YOU FOR A CHANCE FOR ME  
TO WORK AND KEEP ELECTRIC IN OUR  
HOME!

To Sharon,

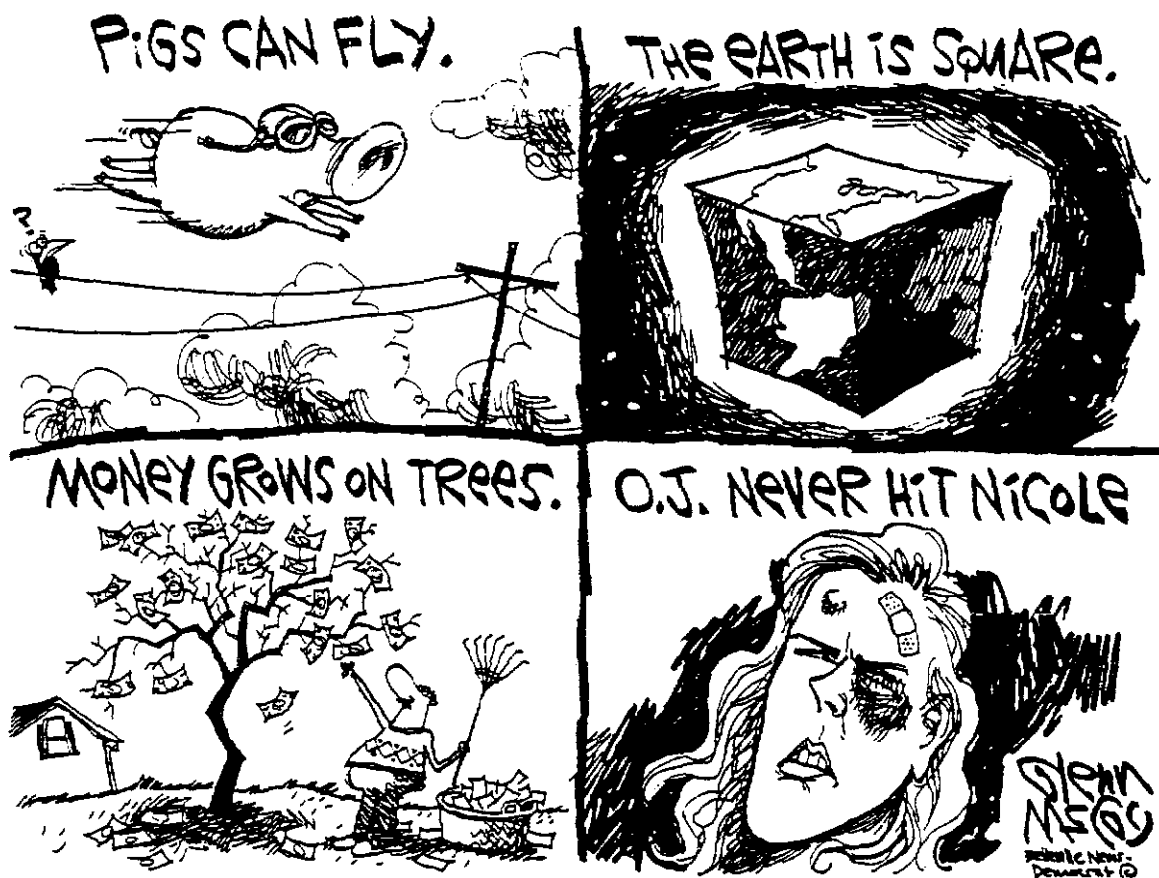
12-8-00

If it wasn't for you and all the others on the hands-up program, I wouldn't have had a chance to get my GED. So I'm very glad to know and to have all of you as my friends. So I, just wanted to write you a real big thank you. I believe the hands-up program is a great deal, to be involved in. You have really been there for me in these last few months. The program has helped me in so many ways. They have helped me to gain self confidence in myself. To make me believe I can do any thing, I want if I work hard enough. Also they have been around when you really need a friend, ~~like~~ like when my father passed away. So I would really like to praise all of the ones that have helped me (but there are two I would like to thank from the bottom of my heart. That is Sharon who came all the way from her job, to meet me and to sign me up. Then there is Sandy who also came all the way to SIC to meet with me. Also there are no better friend than Sharon and Sandy. There is no better program than the hands-up program.

Thank You  
Brenda Tarrence  
Your friend



# OPINIONS



## Our viewpoint

Bellerive Area News  
1996

## A hand up

Most people agree that giving someone a hand up is more helpful in the long run than a handout. That is why we think Sharon Durbin's plan for a work for assistance program in Madison County holds a lot of promise.

Durbin, a customer relations manager for Illinois Power, is holding an organizational meeting next Wednesday for the program. Simply stated, the idea is to have people perform community service in exchange for financial help from churches, community service groups and other organizations. People would earn \$5 an hour for the work they do, and that money would be sent to directly pay for rent, food or utilities.

As Durbin found running a similar program in Montgomery County, work for assistance benefits both the charities that take part and the individuals they help. The charities, instead of simply giving money away, can receive needed services in

exchange. The individuals receiving assistance have a chance to pay their own way. Not only is that good for their dignity but it may help them develop needed job skills. Durbin said one family she worked with had been on Public Aid for more than six years. The program gave the father the confidence to get back into the work force.

As our nation moves to limit welfare benefits, it is important that we find more ways to help people help themselves. The government has tried with programs such as AmeriCorps and YouthBuild, but they have proved so expensive that any benefits are quickly lost in the cost.

Private efforts like this one, with low overhead and less red tape, have a better chance of success.

Durbin invited 200 groups to the organizational meeting at 10:30 a.m. Dec. 4 at St. Luke's United Methodist Church in Maryville. We encourage those invited to attend and explore the possibilities

# Graduates give selves helping hand

By KEN DICKSON  
—A Staff Writer

DECATUR. — The need for assistance with a power bill has led to a new career and outlook for Christine Currie.

Currie, 27, of Decatur began taking an adult education course at the Decatur Area Vocational Center because she enrolled in the Hands Up program to get assistance for a bill. She was required to take a course to obtain a new job skill.

The mother of four and eight other classmates, who each joined for their own reason, graduated Thursday from the housekeeping and janitorial service program.

The pilot class, which met 12 times for four hours each day, awards certificates to its graduates.

Three of the graduates already have jobs. Currie starts today as a housekeep-

er for the Decatur Public Building Commission.

"The class helped because we not only learned about cleaning and chemicals and things like that, but we worked on resumes," she said.

Decatur city councilwoman Betsy Stockard teaches the class.

A second class begins with orientation at 9 a.m. today. The first meeting for that class is at 1 p.m. Monday, and it will meet from 1 to 5 p.m. Mondays, Wednesdays and Thursdays. A third session will run from June 5-26.

Jessie M. Griffin, 44, of Decatur is a certified personal caregiver, but she took the housekeeping-janitorial class to broaden her skills.

"I'm going to go on and get my GED and then go for a teachers aide certificate," she said.

Decatur Mayor Terry Howley attended the short ceremony.

"You have made a definite change in your lives," Howley said. "You have become more independent and self-sufficient. You are role models."

Currie said she went into the program because she had to, but she realized she liked it. Now, she plans to take the basic nursing, welding and introduction to keyboarding classes — more of the adult education offerings.

"They're free, and I think it will lead to bigger and better things," she said. "It will give me a lot of options."

For more information about the DAVC adult education programs, call Rocki Wilkerson at 424-3074.

Ken Dickson can be reached at [kdickson@herald-review.com](mailto:kdickson@herald-review.com) or at 421-7984.

# Belleville News-Democrat

# LOCAL

Section **B**

Friday, November 22, 1996



**Wally  
Spiers**

## Exchanging aid for work

In her 18 years with Illinois Power Co., Sharon Durbin has had her share of frustration in working with customers who consistently can't pay their bills.

She thought there must be something better. So Durbin, a customer relations manager for Illinois Power Co., designed a work donation program that lets people donate time to the community in return for help with their utility, food and rent bills.

"It's a winning strategy for everyone involved," Durbin said.

People prefer to help themselves by donating work and community organizations get some essential volunteer work done, she said.

"I have come in contact with many needs, wants and demands of customers with utility bills," Durbin said. "I have worked with agencies to help customers obtain funds to pay their past due utility bills, money for rent and food. Through this concept I have seen success stories."

Durbin has scheduled a meeting to discuss the concept of donating community service time in exchange for payment with local agencies, churches and other service groups at 10:30 a.m. Dec. 4 at St. Luke's United Methodist Church, 6325 W. Main St. in Maryville.

"We sent out about 200 invitations in Madison County," she said. "Responses are starting to trickle in. We hope for a big turnout."

Durbin used to run a similar program in Montgomery County until she relocated to the metro-east about a year ago.

"I have used it in my job to help people," she said. "Illinois Power is letting me put the time and effort into it."

"I've been here long enough to see that the area could benefit from the same concept. So I decided to step into the water, so to speak, and try and coordinate the efforts," she said.

Participants can do community service work and receive \$5 an hour for up to 99 hours. The money is then sent to designated landlords, cities or utilities to cover bills.

Instead of just giving money away, charitable organizations can get public service work for their money.

Durbin said there are several ways the program could be run, including creation of a board of directors and a nonprofit corporation, creating a one-stop agency within the company or creating a community-based thrift store.

The basis for the program is work done for help received.

"This is not a handout program," she said. "If a community knows that the donations they are giving are staying home and can see the benefits in the community, it helps people become involved."

Durbin said that in her experience she has seen that many people prefer to be able to give something for the assistance they get. But setting up a program will take a lot of work and a lot of community involvement.

"It will take a lot of getting the word out," she said. "That is what makes it work."

For more information, call Durbin at (800) 873-5848, Ext. 6133.

☆☆☆

If you have any ideas for a column, call Wally Spiers at (618) 234-1000, Ext. 506.

INTERNAL REVENUE SERVICE  
DISTRICT DIRECTOR  
P. O. BOX 2505  
CINCINNATI, OH 45201

DEPARTMENT OF THE TREASURY

Date: JUL 21 1997

A HAND UP INC

Sharon L. Durbin  
A Hand Up, Inc. TM  
500 S. 27th St. A-16  
Decatur, IL 62521

Employer Identification Number:  
16-4133952  
DIN:  
17058135345007  
Contact Person:  
D. A. DOWNING  
Contact Telephone Number:  
(513) 241-5195  
Accounting Period Ending:  
December 31  
Foundation Status Classification:  
509(a)(2)  
Advance Ruling Period Begins:  
April 8, 1997  
Advance Ruling Period Ends:  
December 31, 2001  
Addendum Applies:  
No

Dear Applicant:

Based on information you supplied, and assuming your operations will be as stated in your application for recognition of exemption, we have determined you are exempt from federal income tax under section 501(a) of the Internal Revenue Code as an organization described in section 501(c)(3).

Because you are a newly created organization, we are not now making a final determination of your foundation status under section 509(a) of the Code. However, we have determined that you can reasonably expect to be a publicly supported organization described in section 509(a)(2).

Accordingly, during an advance ruling period you will be treated as a publicly supported organization, and not as a private foundation. This advance ruling period begins and ends on the dates shown above.

Within 90 days after the end of your advance ruling period, you must send us the information needed to determine whether you have met the requirements of the applicable support test during the advance ruling period. If you establish that you have been a publicly supported organization, we will classify you as a section 509(a)(1) or 509(a)(2) organization as long as you continue to meet the requirements of the applicable support test. If you do not meet the public support requirements during the advance ruling period, we will classify you as a private foundation for future periods. Also, if we classify you as a private foundation, we will treat you as a private foundation from your beginning date for purposes of section 507(d) and 4940.

Grantors and contributors may rely on our determination that you are not a private foundation until 90 days after the end of your advance ruling period. If you send us the required information within the 90 days, grantors and contributors may continue to rely on the advance determination until we make a final determination of your foundation status.

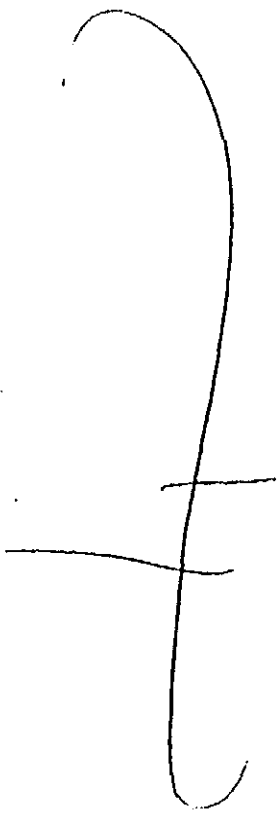
If we publish a notice in the Internal Revenue Bulletin stating that we

Letter 1045 (DO/CG)

Dear Harb's UP!

I am truly grateful for  
the help that you've given me & my  
family. What better Xmas gift to  
receive, right? Thanks again  
for helping the needy, because we do  
try. Many ~~thd~~ Bless

Mrs. Belle



12/13/00

To Whom It May Concern:

I want to thank the "Hands Up Program" for the opportunity to be able to work to get my power bill paid. If it hadn't been for them, I don't know what I would have done. Everyone in the program are really nice to help me. I want to thank Sandy <sup>St. James</sup> and Sandy Palko and everyone at Catholic Charities for helping me. I hope the program gets to continue helping people in need.

Sincerely,  
Betty J. Starnes

“I find the great thing in this world is not  
So much where we stand;  
As in what direction we are moving.”

—Oliver Wendell Homes Sr.

Opportunities  
come  
to those  
who set out  
to meet them



"Sara Howell" <showell2@charter.net> on 03/10/2001 01:50:36 PM

To: <Sharon\_Durbin@illinoispower.com>  
cc: <showell2@charter.net>

Subject: Completion of AHand Up!

I just want to let you know that your program is so much more than just help with your power bill. During this past week I have been involved in this program along with 24 other people. At the beginning people met with the only common goal was to help pay their power bill. The general idea was I can sit here for the results. However, by the end of the week many things have changed. This group came from all parts of Centralia, each had different reason for there bills being behind. Some due to medical problems, some due to loss of jobs and some because they just could not cope with the rising costs. What ever the reason for their physical presence, they walked away with some totally new beliefs. The main belief was that there is hope for a better life if you want to make that choice, as well as they were not alone and people are willing to help them achieve if they are willing to make the effort. I have always felt that God has put people in my life for different reasons at different times in my life. Sometimes it was because they need something from me but I too always received something. I believe we all gained that insight of how differences can make lasting relationships and a common ground to build up on. I sincerely hope that this program continues to grow, I feel that in years to come the results will show the objectives where not only met but exceeded all expectations with long range benefits for the people who have been a part of A Hands Up! Once again ,  
THANK YOU! Sincerly Yours, Sara Howell



# **A Hand Up, Inc. <sup>TM</sup> & Kaskaskia College Workshop**

## **Day 1 -**

Orientation to Workshop and Directions for Facilities Use  
(All partners should have a representative present)

- TABE reading and Math Survey – Adult Ed Staff
- Registration Paperwork - Adult Ed Staff – CEFS staff or transportation/childcare
- Attendance Incentive Program – Adult Ed Staff
- Get Acquainted Activities – Adult Ed Staff
- Intro to Computers – Career Center Staff

## **Day 2 –**

- Career Exploration – Career Center Staff
- Time Management – Career Center Staff
- Dress for Success – Career Center Staff
- Money Management – Adult Ed Staff/Salvation Army Staff
- Shopping Trip to Thrift Store – Salvation Army Staff

## **Day 3 –**

- Resource Fair – Kaskaskia Area Partnership – Clinton County Project Success
- Roundtables – Social Service Agencies
- Meet some employers
- KC Services – Recruitment and Financial Aid – Sharon Donners
- Energy Conservation – IP Representative

## **Day 4 –**

- Resumes – Career Center Staff
- Applications – Career Center Staff
- Job Search – Career Center Staff
- Job Keeping Skills – Career Center Staff
- Relaxation and Stress Reduction – CRC

## **Day 5 – At IETC –**

- Self Esteem and Motivation CRC
- Orientation to resource room – IETC Staff
- Red Cross – Safety Home and the Work Place

**Graduation Ceremony – All partners have a representative present**

# **A Hand Up, Inc.<sup>TM</sup> & CILCO Workshop**

March 19 – 22, 2001

## **Day 1 –**

### **Orientation to Workshop and Directions for Facilities Use**

- Registration and introduction (9:00 – 10:00)
- Attendance Incentive Program – A Hand Up (10:00 – 10:30)
- Big Brother – Big Sister – Benefits of Program to your children (10:30 – 11:15)
- American Red Cross – Info on Family Safety (11:15 – 12:00)
- Lunch (12:00 – 1:00)
- State of Illinois – info & benefits to Kid Care (1:00 – 1:45)
- Energy Conservation – CILCO (2:00 – 2:30)
- Closing remarks (2:30 – 2:45)

## **Day 2 –**

- Share Food Program – Benefits to you and your family (9:30 – 10:30)
- Police Department – Personal Safety (10:45 – 12:00)
- Lunch (12:00 – 1:00)
- Money Management – Consumer Credit Counseling (1:00 – 2:30)
- Social Service Agencies Info (tentative (2:30 – 3:00)
- Closing remarks (3:00 – 3:15)

## **Day 3 –**

- Self- Esteem Awareness – Joy Miller & Assoc. (9:30 – 10:00)
- Relaxation & Stress Reduction – Joy Miller & Assoc. (10:00 – 10:45)
- Lunch (12:00 – 1:00)
- Job Assistance/resume writing – Illinois Work Force (11:00 – 12:00)
- Parent & Family Training – Easter Seals (1:00 – 2:30)
- Closing remarks (2:30 – 2:45)

## **Day 4 –**

- Dressing for Success – Goodwill (9:30 – 9:45)
- Job Keeping Skills – Goodwill (9:45 – 10:45)
- Role Playing for job interviews – Urban League (11:00 – 12:00)
- Lunch (12:00 – 1:00)
- Certificate Presentation (1:00 – 2:00)
- Closing remarks (2:00 – 2:30)
- Closing & finalize program participation